



Development and implementation of a web-based continuing professional development (CPD) programme on medical genetics

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Summary

We developed, implemented and evaluated a web-based continuing professional development (CPD) programme on medical genetics. Development of the CPD programme followed the ADDIE model, i.e. Analysis, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluation. An invitation to participate in a needs analysis survey was sent to all doctors on the email list of the Sri Lanka Medical Association. A total of 129 completed surveys was received (57% of the 228 who accessed the online survey). The average age of respondents was 42 years (range 27–81). The male: female ratio was approximately 2:1. Almost all respondents (96%) selected web-based CPD programmes, or web-based and conventional lectures, as their preferred method of learning. The programme was piloted on a group of 10 doctors. The average pre-knowledge score was 40.3 and the post-knowledge score was 62.1 marks out of 100 ($P=0.002$). We conclude that a web-based CPD programme on medical genetics is feasible in Sri Lanka.

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Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) in medicine refers to the education of physicians after their formal training period has been completed. The aim is to provide better quality health care by keeping the physicians' practice up to-date. Studies have demonstrated that there is no single correct way of doing CPD.¹ There is a subtle difference between CPD and Continuing Medical Education (CME). The latter involves updating only clinical knowledge, whereas the CPD aims to develop and improve a broad range of skills necessary for medical practice.² Thus, CPD incorporates the concept of CME as well as clinical professional and managerial aspects.³

Historically, physicians have maintained their competence, and probably practised medicine better at the end of their careers than at the start, through an innate process of reflective learning and self directed learning.⁴ However, the amount of biomedical knowledge doubles every 20 years,³ and a doctor's practice could become rapidly outdated without activities that allow knowledge and skills to be updated. Thus there is a global trend to introduce CPD in medicine.

In Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) is the national professional medical association and has approximately 3000 members. The SLMA has taken steps to introduce CPD courses/programmes to

Sri Lankan doctors, such as setting up the National Centre for CPD in Medicine.⁵

CPD programmes

The standard format of CPD for many years has been formal study courses, conferences, symposiums or workshops. Due to difficulties such as finances, time, job demands and work-life balance, CPD programmes are not accessible to those who live away from the main cities.¹ The introduction of e-learning has made CPD programmes easily accessible, even to doctors from rural areas.

The first online CPD course in the world was offered in 1996.⁶ In the past few years, CPD on the Internet has

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